

Testimony of Darrell Barnes
Senate Bill 1195

Hi my name is Darrell Barnes and I am a student at Common Ground High School. This is a small charter school located in New Haven. When I started off as a freshman I wanted to get out of that school as soon as possible. My mother had to come in because of a behavior issue before the first day of school. My first impression of the school was not the best; it was too small, the animals stink, the teachers were kind of weird (no offense to them), and there were too many rules. But, as my time went on I started to see what this school had done for me and what it had saved me from. This is my last year at the school so this bill won't affect me personally, but I care so much for my school that I am willing to do anything to help.

If I had gone to a traditional public school I don't think that I would be as well prepared for the world as I am now. In a public school there's a bigger setting, with more kids, more stuff going on and more distractions. I was lucky to have a school like Common Ground as a better alternative. But, charters like these may not be around for long because of the amount of funding they receive. I would love for them to be around when I have kids because of what they did for me. If I went to my district school, which is Hillhouse High, I don't think I would be graduating this year. But, I am now senior class president, and also volunteering and working for different companies that Common Ground got me involved with.

There are classes at my school that are not offered in other schools, such as environment ventures. In this class we study the basic aspect of business and even got to pitch, create, and sell a product. I choose to make catnip toys and pies. The catnip was grown right on campus, in our natural organic garden. Then we took our product and sold them to the public, making about \$200 in revenue. Public schools don't give us the chance to work on stuff like this. We felt the real world and we understood what it was like to be a business owner.

I believe that it is unfair that charter schools don't get as much as public schools do for each student. What makes it even worse is that my home district still gets the money if I don't attend school there, which forces us to spend extra money when we don't need to. This current plan is not working because it is hurting. It also makes me feel like I am not equal to any one who attends Hillhouse or Cross because we only receive 2/3 of what they get. This reminds me of back in the times of slavery when slaves received 2/3s of a vote because they were less human than the white people. Am I less of a student then someone who attends Cross? I believe the total opposite! We deserve more than other schools because of the amount of effort the teachers and students put into keeping this school open. We are closer connected with each other, which makes us stronger than Cross. So please consider my or any other charter students opinion when you make your decision on the funding for charter schools' by passing Senate Bill 1195.

Sincerely,
Darrell Barnes
Senior class president of 2011